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DEDICATION ADDRESS

DELIVERED ON THE OCCASION OF

THE DEDICATION OF THE EGBERT STARR LIBRARY OF MIDDLEBURY COLLEGE

JULY 3, 1900

BY

BRAINERD KELLOGG, LL.D.

DEAN OF POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE, BROOKLYN, N.Y.

CAMBRIDGE
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By DEAN BRAINERD KELLOGG

Fellow Alumni and Ladies and Gentlemen:

WE are here to commemorate a rich gift to the College, and to dedicate to its great service in the future this library building into which the gift has been converted. Tell me, I pray you, how your speaker may best do what he has been asked, and has promised, to do in this commemoration. Shall it be in part by lauding the generosity of our departed friend, to whom, though not a graduate, this commodious structure, beautiful in design, tasteful in its appointments, and so well suited to its purpose, is due? Shall it be by comparing or contrasting it with buildings of its kind elsewhere? Shall it be by dwelling upon this significant fact, that of the ten regal edifices of the land, two are libraries—that of Columbia College and the National Library at Washington, and both of recent erection? Shall it be by glorifying the wisdom of our esteemed donor and that of all such donors, of whom the most flaming example of the day is Andrew Carnegie? Shall it be by showing that to such gifts a peculiar honor and value belong in that they inspire so many men to the giving of

books that thus the building may be justified and its purpose fulfilled?

Shall I, must I, spend my hour upon these and kindred subjects? I do not wish to do so, and I think I read in your faces that I need not. I want to speak of books instead of the buildings that house them; books in which are deposited and imprisoned in words the thoughts of the living and of the dead; thoughts loosely related on the page and thoughts traced there to their underlying principles, and built up into stately sciences, into vast systems of speculation and belief, and into the more attractive body of literature itself. Of my own volition, then, and with your approval, I turn to my topic,— Books, their Contents and their Uses.

Their contents are thoughts, created by detecting and affirming the relations that exist between things and hence between our ideas of things; relations between things in the world without, between things in the world within, between the things in the world without *and* the things in the world within; relations existing with little or no agency of ours. To detect these relations and to affirm them in judgments is to think, is to create thought. The thinker, and he alone among men — but the term includes us all — is a creator, and that in the high sense of the word.

Man finds fibrous wool growing, and somehow conceives that it can be spun and woven, and that

out of the cloth garments can be made to protect and adorn his person. He sees ore lying all around him, and there flash upon him successively, in successive ages perhaps, the several processes by which it may be smelted into iron, the iron wrought into steel, and the steel converted into engines. Wood and stone and metal abound, and in some happy moment they suggest to him their utilization to meet human needs, and lo! upon some convolution of his brain there appears his plan of a building. Thus far all is thought, a pure creation; and he, the thinker, is its creator. But when he goes on to change the wool into clothes, the ore into engines, and the stone and wood and metal into a building he is not creating; he is only transforming matter into an outward embodiment of his inward thought, which alone is his real creation. In all these transformations, matter, material, is consumed. There is, in illustration, just so much less of wood and metal and stone left for others to use as the builder of this structure took for his own use.

But the things out of whose relations the thinker creates his thoughts are not even touched by the operation. They remain for others to use in other ways, for others to use in the same way; for, out of the same relation between the same things, thousands have successively created the same thought, each thinker ignorant that he was not its original

creator. And, if wholly ignorant of what had been done before him, each was the original creator.

My friends, it would not be irreverent in me to suggest that the matter out of which the worlds were wrought, nay, the very stuff, whatever it be, out of which our minds were formed, may not have been created by the Almighty, but that it was and is co-eternal with him. Perhaps, who shall say? perhaps he only fashioned what he found; made the outer and the inner world out of substance coexistent with himself from the beginning, if beginning there was. But at least he fashioned it all after those archetypal thoughts which he *did* create, and so realized his thoughts in things. Yet, if he did not create this primal matter out of nothing, he differs from you and from me as creator only in degree and not in kind. As his works are not our works, so his thoughts are not our thoughts but far above them; and therein he is the supreme Creator. But, unless he made the original something out of nothing, his creations are not more genuine creations than are ours.

In this power to think, to create, are we made in the image and likeness of God. With what dignity, then, I had almost said divinity, does this power clothe us! What nobility belongs to our thoughts, few and feeble though they be! What sacredness attaches to books that contain these thoughts! And how like a temple should we regard such a building

as this devoted to their preservation! Well might Milton, in his indignant outcry against the censorship of the press in his day, exclaim: "As good almost kill a man as kill a good book; who kills a man kills a reasonable creature, but he who destroys a good book kills reason itself."

Our one inextinguishable grief respecting libraries is, that they do not date back to the beginning of human thought. Men did not write as soon as they began to think and to talk. The characters we call letters are not coeval with the sounds they represent. The air, the lungs, and the organs of the mouth and the throat — all things needful for speech — were at hand; but visible signs for audible sounds and the instruments and materials for making these had to be prepared. In no libraries, then, have we any record of what our primeval ancestors thought and said about things and about themselves. Between us and so many æons of our race there hangs an interceptive and impenetrable veil. Of all on the other side we are ignorant, save when a Schliemann unearths thence a buried city, or another archæologist recovers something prehistoric but of human workmanship. Upon everything else we may speculate and speculate, but our speculations are founded, not upon the rock, but upon the sand.

Had words been written as soon as spoken, and had this writing, preserved in libraries, reached us,

perhaps we should know where the human race started and when; whether from one pair or from many pairs; and whether this one or these many by special fiat or from creatures infra-human. Darwin then need never have vexed his brain with the Origin of Species, nor Drummond his with the Ascent of Man. Perhaps we should know whether the old homestead of our Indo-European family was in Europe or in Asia; when and whither the successive migrations from it set forth; and whether those across Europe and that one over the passes and down into upper Hindostan encountered and drove before them races already there. Perhaps we should no longer conjecture concerning the origin of language; what the first words were and how formed; how some have run down into derivative prefixes and suffixes, and others into grammatical inflections, and what these all meant and mean. Perhaps we might follow the other steps by which man emerged from brutehood into the manhood in which we find him when history gets its first snap-shot at him. Then had our knowledge of our kind been what Macbeth wished to be, — "Whole as the marble, founded as the rock, as broad and general as the casing air."

We are not greatly disturbed that error has crept into books. We are not infallible; and we are all glad of it, because infallibility does not make an agreeable writer or a pleasant companion. And what

a loss to us, if, without testing it to see if it be true, we had to swallow everything books put into our intellectual mouths! — a loss not of enjoyment alone but of profit and of power as well! For nothing is more wholesome and disciplinary than scepticism; and once there was no nobler word in the language than its name, since it meant seeing, looking into things. Error in books is harmless; only error in our premises, our reasoning, our conclusions, our theories, our knowledge, is harmful. There it is as the flaw in the boiler of an ocean steamship, as an air-bubble in the shaft. Only, we may comfort ourselves with the thought that not everything called error is error. Even heresy is but the belief of one with whom we do not agree; and the heresy anathematized in one age is so often the creed of the next. The first weapon of the reader against error is defensive, doubt, which, like a breakwater, holds everything at bay and as long as we wish; the second and last is offensive, thought — thought profound, penetrative, protracted, and exhaustive. The best books are those that stimulate the reader to the most vigorous questioning, that drive the ploughshare through our most cherished opinions and beliefs and compel rigorous reexamination. Not homeopathy but enantiopathy, some one says, is the true medicine for the mind.

But, though books are not coeval with thought, they are of incalculable worth to us. They

enable investigators in every field to begin their labors where those just ahead of them left off. Libraries, to appropriate Hamilton's figure, are the fortresses by which we hold the territory we have conquered; and they become in turn the bases for new conquests. The multiplication of books makes the progress of this and of every century to stand in geometrical ratio to that of its predecessor.

And to those of us who are not investigators, books are beyond all price. Knowledge won by observation and by reflection on what we observe — first-hand knowledge — is better than any other of course; but, if restricted to this, what intellectual starvelings should we be! We should get this knowledge, get all we can of it; but let us remember that second-hand knowledge, knowledge gleaned from thoughtful reading, is good; good in that it stimulates to the other; and good, inexpressibly good, in itself. Let us get all we can of this too.

Show me where libraries — large or small, college or village libraries or, as in my childhood, school-district libraries — abound, and I will show you men keen of eye and ear and tongue and men of stalwart views. They may follow the plough, shove the plane, shoe your horses; but, unlike the dyer's hand, their natures are not subdued to what they work in and with.

But it is time for a distinction. There are thoughts and thoughts, a lower range and a higher; thoughts systematized into sciences, and thoughts forming the staple of literature. May I, without offending any here, call those of the first order facts rather than thoughts? facts disclosing themselves to the unaided eye and to the eye aided by the telescope and the microscope; facts in the worlds above, in the earth beneath, in human consciousness within; facts easily seen, facts tortured into sight by crucial experiments in our laboratories, chemical, physical, biological, and even psychological. Thoughts proper, the thoughts of literature, are these same facts of nature, external and internal, along with their suggestions, added to or taken from, elaborated and applied, carried up in the scale, tinged, if not charged, with emotion, appealing not to our intellects alone but to our whole mental nature, and entering themselves into our intellectual, æsthetic, ethical, and spiritual lives. Facts are as the air; thoughts, as the air flooded with ether, pervaded with light, tingling with heat, and tremulous with actinic waves.

Let me give you more than this glimpse of the distinction. Water becomes ice at 32° F. Water cleanses the body and the clothes it wears. Water expands and rises in becoming vapor; and vapor, cooling, condenses and concentrates and falls as rain or snow. These are simple scientific facts, as

cold and bloodless as the multiplication table or the least common multiple. But now when actually or by implication I carry these facts up and say that the king of Siam, living under a vertical sun, would not believe that water could harden so that one might walk or skate upon it; that water, cleansing material things, is a fit element for use in baptism, which symbolizes purification from sin; and that the water of earth and ocean, stealing upward in invisible vapor, is gathered into the vast storehouses of the clouds, and descends as rain to make the meadows green, to ripen the harvests, and to refresh the toiling and fainting multitudes of men,—when I do this, I am putting life and blood into these cold scientific facts, and am taking them up to where they at least approximate, if they do not become, the thoughts of literature.

So much for the distinction. I pause for a moment to preface what is to follow. Science doubtless will have a public celebration like this when the new Science Hall rises on the other side of the campus to match and to mate the Library on this; and another speaker stands there, as I do here, to dedicate the building. Literature, it seems then, is to have its innings to-day. I have taken a retainer for it; yet I am not a lawyer, and I have no motive for pressing the evidence for more than it fully warrants. But I should be a traitor to my deepest beliefs and to my chair of instruction, once here but

long elsewhere, and should be false to this occasion, did I not proclaim, as from the housetop, that such buildings as this are meant primarily to house the books of literature, in whatever language written and read. Now do not misunderstand me, please. Fill all the stacks of the library you need with books of science — and may they rain down upon you in daily showers, — and send your students here constantly to consult them. But — I speak as a fool doubtless, yet Paul once said he did and that comforts me, I speak as a layman at any rate who wishes he knew ten thousand times as much of science as he does — but, I repeat, I cannot resist the conviction and the expression of it here, that, in spite of its age, science is yet infantile. So many sciences by fissiparous generation, by gemmation and segmentation, are dividing and subdividing with a rapidity that startles one; and books on these divisions and subdivisions are issuing, as bees from the hive, — so many of them, as their authors themselves concede, out of date before they are out of the press!

They are invigorating reading, I grant you; but the misery of it is, that what in them is certain and what is problematical is itself a problem, and that so much must be taken, if taken at all, only tentatively. "What, Mr. Gladstone, is the position of science on this most vital question?" "I do not know, sir," was the instant response, "I have not

seen the morning paper." The pathway of no other kind of research is so strewn with misfit theories, exploded systems, and abandoned knowledge, not to mention daring postulates, as is that of science.

But even when beyond all question vital and true, scientific facts, I have no hesitancy in saying, do not compare with the thoughts of literature as pabulum for the mind. In impatient moods, one is sometimes tempted to say that in nutritive function science is to literature as the grass upon which the ox grazes is to the sirloin into which he converts it; and it takes his four tough stomachs to do this! Make of the sciences more, if possible, than you do — and may the library aid you vastly in the work, — but remember that there are other and weightier matters in education. Get your students, as often as you may, out of the narrow, and if long pursued the narrowing, grooves of chemistry, electricity, physics, mathematics, and biology, and set their feet on the broad highway of literature, English, Latin, Greek, German, and French. I speak that I do know, and testify that I have so often seen, when I say that a disproportionate, nay, a generous, study of any one of these sciences does not make the best kind of mind; does not make the best kind of intellect even, for to the other departments of the mind it brings almost no sustenance at all. Intellects so nourished lack toughness of fiber and strength and breadth and depth and acumen

and delicacy and the culture we call humanism. It is all but impossible for students to transmute the scientific facts learned into intellect, so that there shall be more of it because of the study, and it shall be able to think more profoundly and discriminatingly, and with keener apprehension of the relations of fact to fact, of truth to truth, and of the unity of all truth. This must be got, if got at all, from the study of literature and kindred studies, I believe. Make without encroachment, I repeat, as much as possible of science, remembering, however, that it would be a prostitution of the College as a college to convert it into a school out of which students at graduation may step into positions where they can earn a living as chemists or electricians or biologists. The business of the college proper, of a proper college, is like that of the dam at Belden's Falls, slowly to accumulate a power which, when the gate is opened, will be able to turn any machinery on the bank. But it is not its business technically to qualify the neophyte alumnus to put up such machinery, or to run it after it is put up by another. The purely scientific school, like the law school in its field, like the theological seminary in its,— the purely scientific school is to supplement the scientific training done in this or in any other college. Now I most potently believe, and hence most urgently insist, that this accumulation of power — in mill phrase, this getting a head — is to

be done by a preponderating study of literature itself.

But of course there are facts to be learned in the study of literature, English, Latin, Greek, German, etc. Most of these it is the business of the preparatory school to teach; but many, I know, are left to the college professor. He may, however, do too much, far too much, of this work, especially if, through bias or through his limitations, he detains upon it students who are ready for the real study of literature. It must be, I suppose, that such offences come; they do come at any rate. I know a professor in one of the great universities of the land, imported from a distant state, and placed at the head of the English department, whose whole work with the undergraduates is the tithing of this mint, anise, and cummin of the text, and who leaves to his subordinates all the instruction in literature that is really vital. Such offences come; but is it not written, "Woe unto him by whom the offence cometh"?

Now in English — and here I hope I stand on ground less slippery — the way has largely been cleared of these bald facts for the college student before matriculation. The reading of good books at home, attrition with cultivated people, English grammar rightly taught, and the required reading done in school have accomplished a good deal; and logic and rhetoric after matriculation have

powerfully aided in the work. Presuming, then, that in these and other preliminary studies the student has learned what to look for in the critical study of authors and how to estimate his findings; presuming, too, that he is not browsing at will but is judiciously guided, and that he does the work himself and has n't it done for him by textbook or teacher, — presuming, I say, upon all these things, what ought the student to show at graduation for his work in English? What sheaves should he have brought home from his long years of gleaning?

He should be able, I think, to tell whether the thought he encounters on the page is true or not, and whether valuable if true; whether original or trite; germane to the sub-topic of the paragraph or alien to it; upon what, in Locke's phrase, the thought is bottomed, and whether well or ill-neighbored by the context; what inferences flow from it; and whether its author dominates it or is dominated by it.

He should know what kind of sentence the author affects, — simple, compound, complex, climacteric, balanced, periodic, or loose, — or whether he mingles all these gracefully on the page; whether or not he is felicitous in the choice and marshaling of his words, in the use of imagery that turns a search-light upon the thought, and in a variety of phrasing that keeps the reader ever fresh and alert;

in a word, whether he is master or not of a style always adapted to his thought and level to his purpose. He should be able to read in and between the lines the author's attainments, limitations, biases, tastes, disposition, temperament, traits of character — the man himself. He should know the peculiarities, the *differentia*, of the great authors at least, and be keen in detecting the taste of each and in giving the parentage of quotations and of passages gone astray. He should have made his own, large measures of the thought he has studied, and be able to enrich his discourse by levying tribute at will upon what he has read.

But this is not all. To stop short with mere possessions, even such as I have named, would be to bring the tree to full leafage and blossom, but not to fruitage. His acquisitions, while remaining acquisitions, should at the same time, paradoxical as it may seem, have been transmuted into ability to do and into actual doing what he has learned that it is good to do; and the charming Portia is authority for saying that the one task is not always as easy as the other. At graduation he should be, in a generous sense of the word, a vigorous and discriminating thinker; and he should be able to express his thoughts forcibly if need be but luminously and appropriately always and with an affluence of vocabulary, a fulness of diction, that forever forestalls his riding a few pet, spent, and spavined

verbal steeds to death, when relays of fresh steeds, saddled and bridled and impatient for service, await him all along the line, if only in his wide excursions among authors he has corralled and lassoed these and tamed them to his bidding.

But pardon me, my friends, pardon me! Murder will out, and so will the pedagogue! What I have left myself to say shall be for all and not for the undergraduate and the teacher only.

That man is made for work, and not that work is made for man; that business is lord and he the vassal; that we are not ourselves ends but only means to ends — a livelihood, a fortune, position, — this is not the gospel preached nowadays, but is it not the gospel practiced? And so we light our little candle at both ends, and presently burn out in nervous exhaustion; or, later, drop suddenly dead of heart failure. Vocations, vocations, on every side! But what and where are the avocations? Physical relaxations abound — walking, the wheel, tennis, golf, etc., — but what intellectual and æsthetic recreations have we, aside from the diversions of home life, life in the church, and life in the club? I know of but one worthy of the name, open and accessible to all, and that is — reading.

What rest and recuperation and rejuvenescence in a good book! What perennial delight to the reader in the thoughts, fresh and subtile, serious or playful, massive or elusive, seen through words

transparent as crystal and as inevitable as fate, through phrases felicitous in combination, and imagery exquisite in function and teeming with suggestion — all the utilities and all the graces of style lavished, if need be, upon the thought that it may have apt incarnation, that there may be "fit body to fit head"! How it charms the reader to see that not alone do sheer weight and strength of thought avail, but care in wording and in placing it as well; that not always does the burly Roderick Dhu prevail, but ofttimes the lighter yet more dexterous Fitz James!

Oh! the luxury of a good book with its "apples of gold in pictures of silver," hanging these pictures all over the walls of memory, and they streaming their gracious influences down upon us in our dark hours and in all our hours to gladden and inspire! For a Troyon or a Church or a Corot you spend your thousands, if able, and you do well; but for an equal sum you may gather together a modest library, on hundreds and hundreds of whose pages are verbal pictures in prose and in verse, any one of which may yield you a keener and more lasting enjoyment than does the great masterpiece on the wall.

Oh! the luxury of a good book suited to some one of our ever-varying moods and needs! It comes at our call, tarries as long as we wish, and goes back to the shelf at our bidding. If, as Plato com-

plains, the author keeps silence when we would fain catechise him respecting something he has said, so too he never opens his mouth to bicker with us and to insist. He takes no offence, if, weary of his presence, we turn our backs upon him, but waits calm and serene till we summon him again, well knowing that we shall. We bitterly regret that we have not been face to face with some of the great ones of our time; but here in these volumes are the great ones of all time, and at their best estate, mutely pleading with us for an introduction, eager for an intimate acquaintanceship; for what, as Martineau asks, is literature "but the appeal of thought to thought through silent ages; an appeal that is forever forming new friendships, quickening young genius, and drawing forth fresh tears?"

You go to your merchant, and you pay at least its full value for what you buy of him, all it cost the men and the women that had anything to do in its production and its handling. But behold! I show you a marvel, a mystery, a miracle. You move in your social circles, and you shed, each of you, a single influence, the same wholesome influence, upon your hundreds of friends; but in exchange there streams in upon you an ennobling influence from every individual of the hundreds. One influence exerted by each of you, hundreds received! For the hire of a day's labor in harvest time, you purchase the Plays of Shakespeare, the

work of a score of years, bartering your ten hours of manual toil for the mental toil of a lifetime, — the lifetime, too, of the greatest of the immortals! What Rothschilds should we all suddenly become could we buy the material things we need on such terms! We could not derive such advantage from things immaterial, were it not that we live in society, where each may move at the same time upon many; were it not that thought and feeling can be put into words and this wording be infinitely multiplied by the press; were it not, above all else, that thought is of such a nature and is so connected with its verbal expression that, though any one of us should extract from an essay or a poem, and appropriate as his own, all the thought and the passion it contains, yet there would be as much left in it as before for another and another, and so on to the last though millions should read it. Let your undergraduates come to this building and feed, we will say, upon the thoughts of "Hamlet," and from the same copy of the play; yet the thought and the emotion and the inspiration in it will not in a thousand years have been diminished by a single iota. "You cannot feed capons so."

All the principles of political economy are set at naught when we deal with the contents of books and with the influence of mind upon mind and character upon character. It was this fascinating phase of

the subject that moved me at last to accept the invitation of the committee, that I might stand here to-day to present and to press it. He who, like Egbert Starr, puts of his substance into a library or who, like his brother Charles — Charles and Egbert! *fratres nobilissimi et generosissimi* — or who, like his brother Charles, by endowing the College, keeps the living professor in his chair to do even better than books what books do, has invested in something that will not decline in quotation, that can never waste, never lessen; and the revenue from which cannot be computed even in kind, much less be estimated in gold and silver, our vulgar equivalent for things material.

Ladies and gentlemen, I had hoped that Dr. Starr, the distinguished son of our generous donor, would be here to-day. In his absence, I wish we might think that Egbert, the father, had not, in learning his celestial tongue, forgotten his terrestrial, and that he would be willing to absent himself from felicity awhile, and mingle with us to see and to hear what we are doing to his honor to-day. For in some way I want him to know that not to the value of a single penny of his great gift are we Middlebury alumni, present and future, we Middlebury people, present and future, insensible; that we have done with his gift just what we think he would have counseled us to do had he been with us

all along; and that now, conscious of his approval and clothed with his authority, we set apart and dedicate to its mission through coming ages this his building, bearing forever over its portal his honored name.